

CHARLES DARWIN ON:

ON PHYSICAL BEAUTY

Remember that with savage races of man various hideous deformities – deep scars on the face with the flesh raised into protuberances, the septum of the nose pierced by sticks or bones, holes in the ears and lips stretched widely open – are all admired as ornamental.

As the face with us is chiefly admired for its beauty, so with savages it is the chief seat of mutilation. In all quarters of the world the septum, and more rarely the wings of the nose are pierced; rings, sticks, feathers, and other ornaments being inserted into the holes. The ears are everywhere pierced and similarly ornamented.

The wife of the chief of Latooka told Sir S. Baker that Lady Baker 'would be much improved if she would extract her four front teeth from the lower jaw, and wear the long pointed polished crystal in her under lip.'

We thus see how widely the different races of man differ in their taste for the beautiful.

Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, 2nd ed., John Murray, London, 1874, pp. 650; 876; 877; 886.

ON RACE

We see the value set on animals even by the barbarians of Tierra del Fuego, by their killing and devouring their old women, in times of dearth, as of less value than their dogs.

If the country were open on its borders, new forms would certainly immigrate, and this would also seriously disturb the relations of some of the former inhabitants. Let it be remembered how powerful the influence of a single introduced tree or mammal has been shown to be.

He who believes in the struggle for existence and in the principle of natural selection, will acknowledge that every organic being is constantly endeavouring to increase in numbers; and thus if any one being vary ever so little, either in habits or structure, and thus gain an advantage over some other inhabitant of the country, it will seize on the place of that inhabitant, however different it may be from its own place.

The variability or diversity of the mental faculties in men of the same race, not to mention the greater differences between the men of distinct races, is so notorious that not a word need here be said.

Nor is the difference slight in moral disposition between a barbarian, such as the man described by the old navigator Byron, who dashed his child on the rocks for dropping a basket of sea urchins, and a Howard or Clarkson; and in intellect, between a savage who uses hardly any abstract terms, and a Newton or Shakspeare. Differences of this kind between the highest men of the highest races and the lowest savages, are connected by the finest graduations.

A tribe including many members who, from possessing in a high degree the spirit of patriotism, fidelity, obedience, courage, and sympathy, were always ready to aid one another, and to sacrifice themselves for the common good, would be victorious over most other tribes; and this would be natural selection.

Many races, some of which differ so much from each other, that they have often been ranked by naturalists as distinct species.

At some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilised races of man will almost certainly exterminate, and replace, the savage races throughout the world... The break between men and his nearest allies will then be wider.

We must not judge of the tastes of distinct species by a uniform standard; nor must we judge by the standard of man's taste. Even with man, we should remember what discordant noises, the beating of tom-toms and the shrill notes of reeds, please the ears of savages.

[Man] has diverged into distinct races, or as they may be more fitly called, sub-species. Some of these, such as the Negro and the European, are so distinct that, if specimens had been brought to a naturalist without any further information, they would undoubtedly have been considered as good and true species.

For my part I would as soon be descended from that heroic little monkey, who braved his dreaded enemy in order to save the life of his keeper, or from that old baboon, who descending from the mountains, carried away in triumph his young comrade from a crowd of astonished dogs – as from a savage who delights to torture his enemies, offers up bloody sacrifices, practices infanticide without remorse, treats his wives like slaves, knows no decency, and is haunted by the grossest superstitions.

Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, 1st ed., Penguin, London, 1968; pp. 94; 131; 217; *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, 2nd ed., John Murray, London, 1874, pp. 40; 99; 203; 225; 241; 580; 929; 946.

ON RACE-MIXING

When two distinct races are crossed, it is notorious that the tendency in the offspring to revert to one or both parent forms is strong, and endures for many generations.

The Earl of Powis formerly imported some thoroughly domesticated humped cattle from India, and crossed them with English breeds, which belong to a distinct species; and his agent remarked to me, without any question having been asked, how oddly wild the cross-bred animals were.

These latter facts remind us of the statements, so frequently made by travellers in all parts of the world, on the degraded state and savage disposition of crossed races of man. That many excellent and kind-hearted mulattos have existed no one will dispute; and a more mild and gentle set of men could hardly be found than the inhabitants of the island of Chilce, who consist of Indians commingled with Spaniards in various proportions. On the other hand, many years ago, long before I had thought of the present subject, I was struck with the fact that, in South America, men of complicated descent between Negroes, Indians, and Spaniards, seldom had, whatever the cause might be, a good expression.¹ Livingstone,— and a more unimpeachable authority cannot be quoted,— after speaking of a half-caste man on the Zambesi, described by the Portuguese as a rare monster of inhumanity, remarks, “It is unaccountable why half-castes, such as he, are so much more cruel than the Portuguese, but such is undoubtedly the case.” An inhabitant remarked to Livingstone, “God made white men, and God made black men, but the Devil made half-castes.”² When two races, both low in the scale, are crossed the progeny seems to be eminently bad. Thus the noble-hearted Humboldt, who felt no prejudice against the inferior races, speaks in strong terms of the bad and savage disposition of Zambos, or half-castes between Indians and Negroes; and this conclusion has been arrived at by various observers.³ From these facts we may perhaps infer that the degraded state of so many half-castes is in part due to reversion to a primitive and savage condition, induced by the act of crossing, even if mainly due to the unfavourable moral conditions under which they are generally reared.

Journal of Researches, 1845, p. 71.

Expedition to the Zambesi, 1865, pp. 25, 150.

Dr. P. Broca, on 'Hybridity in the Genus Homo,' Eng. transl., 1864, p. 39.

No man in his senses would expect to improve or modify a breed in any particular manner, or keep an old breed true and distinct, unless he separated his animals.

It is a very surprising fact that characters should reappear after having been lost for many, perhaps for hundreds of generations. But when a breed has been crossed only once by some other breed, the offspring occasionally show a tendency to revert in character to the foreign breed for many generations – some say, for a dozen or even a score of generations. After twelve generations, the proportion of blood, to use a common expression, of any one ancestor, is only 1 in 2048; and yet, as we see, it is generally believed that a tendency to reversion is retained by this very small proportion of foreign blood.

How strongly these domestic instincts, habits, and dispositions are inherited, and how curiously they become mingled, is well shown when different breeds of dogs are crossed. Thus it is known that a cross with a bull-dog has affected for many generations the courage and obstinacy of greyhounds; and a cross with a greyhound has given to a whole family of shepherd-dogs a tendency to hunt hares.

Some species have a remarkable power of crossing with other species; other species of the same genus have a remarkable power of impressing their likeness on their hybrid offspring.

I think these authors are right, who maintain that the ass has a prepotent power over the horse, so that both the mule and the hinny more resemble the ass than the horse; but that the prepotency runs more strongly in the male-ass than in the

female, so that the mule, which is the offspring of the male-ass and mare, is more like an ass, than is the hinny, which is the offspring of the female-ass and stallion.

Charles Darwin, *The Variation of Plants and Animals under Domestication*, 2nd ed., John Murray, London, 1875, vol. II, pp. 8; 19; 21; 62-63; *The Origin of Species*, 1st ed., Penguin, London, 1968; pp. 196; 239 (see also 1875: 1/43); 275; 287 (see also 1875: 2/43).

ON STERILE MALES

With male animals, it is notorious that the secondary sexual characters are more or less completely lost when they are subject to castration. Thus, if the operation be performed on a young cock, he never, as Yarrel states, crows again; the comb, wattles, and spurs do not grow to their full size, and the hackles assume an intermediate appearance between true hackles and the feathers of the hen. Cases are recorded of confinement, which often affects the reproductive system, causing analogous results. But characters properly confined to the female are likewise acquired by the male; the capon takes to sitting on eggs, and will bring up chickens; and what is more curious, the utterly sterile male hybrids from the pheasant and the fowl act in the same manner, 'their delight being to watch when the hens leave their nests, and take on themselves the office of a sitter.' That admirable observer Réaumur asserts that a cock, by being long confined in solitude and darkness, can be taught to take charge of young chickens; he then utters a peculiar cry, and retains during his whole life this newly acquired maternal instinct.

Charles Darwin, *The Variation of Plants and Animals under Domestication*, 2nd ed., John Murray, London, 1875, vol. II, pp. 26-27.

ON THE INFERIORITY OF WOMAN

Without the higher powers of the imagination and reason, no eminent success can be gained in many subjects. These latter faculties, as well as the former, will have been developed in man, partly through sexual selection,— that is, through the contest of rival males, and partly through natural selection,— from success in the general struggle for life; and as in both cases the struggle will have been during maturity, the characters gained will have been transmitted more fully to the male than to the female offspring. It accords in a striking manner with this view of the modification and re-inforcement of many of our mental faculties by sexual selection, that, firstly, they notoriously undergo a considerable change at puberty, and, secondly, that eunuchs remain throughout life inferior in these same qualities. Thus man has ultimately become superior to woman. It is, indeed, fortunate that the law of the equal transmission of characters to both sexes prevails with mammals; otherwise it is probable that man would have become as superior in mental endowment to woman, as the peacock is in ornamental plumage to the peahen.

Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, 2nd ed., John Murray, London, 1874, pp. 859-860.

ON WOMEN CHOOSING HUSBANDS

In utterly barbarous tribes the women have more power in choosing, rejecting, and tempting their lovers, or of afterwards changing their husbands, than might have been expected. As this is a point of some importance, I will give in detail such evidence as I have been able to collect.

Hearne describes how a woman in one of the tribes of Arctic America repeatedly ran away from her husband and joined her lover; and with the Charruas of S. America, according to Azara, divorce is quite optional. Amongst the Abipones, a man on choosing a wife bargains with the parents about the price. But 'it

frequently happens that the girl rescinds what has been agreed upon between the parents and the bridegroom, obstinately rejecting the very mention of marriage.' She often runs away, hides herself, and thus eludes the bridegroom. Captain Musters who lived with the Patagonians, says that their marriages are always settled by inclination; 'if the parents make a match contrary to the daughter's will, she refuses and is never compelled to comply.' In Tierra del Fuego a young man first obtains the consent of the parents by doing them some service, and then he attempts to carry off the girl; 'but if she is unwilling, she hides herself in the woods until her admirer is heartily tired of looking for her, and gives up the pursuit; but this seldom happens.' In the Fiji Islands the man seizes on the woman whom he wishes for his wife by actual or pretended force; but 'on reaching the home of her abductor, should she not approve of the match, she runs to some one who can protect her; if, however, she is satisfied, the matter is settled forthwith.' With the Kalmucks there is a regular race between the bride and bridegroom, the former having a fair start; and Clarke 'was assured that no instance occurs of a girl being caught, unless she has a partiality to the pursuer.' Amongst the wild tribes of the Malay Archipelago there is also a racing match; and it appears from M. Bourien's account, as Sir J. Lubbock remarks, that 'the race, "is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong" but to the young man who has the good fortune to please his intended bride.' A similar custom, with the same result, prevails with the Koraks of North-Eastern Asia.

Turning to Africa: the Kafirs buy their wives, and girls are severely beaten by their fathers if they will not accept a chosen husband; but it is manifest from many facts given by the Rev. Mr. Shooter, that they have considerable power of choice. Thus very ugly, though rich men, have been known to fail in getting wives. The girls, before consenting to be betrothed, compel the men to shew themselves off first in front and then behind, and 'exhibit their paces.' They have been known to propose to a man, and they not rarely run away with a favoured lover. So again, Mr. Leslie, who was intimately acquainted with the Kafirs, says, 'it is a mistake to imagine that a girl is sold by her father in the same manner, and with the same authority, with which he would dispose of a cow.' Amongst the degraded Bushmen of S. Africa, 'when a girl has grown up to womanhood without having been betrothed, which, however, does not often happen, her lover must gain her

approbation, as well as that of the parents.' Mr. Winwood Reade made inquiries for me with respect to the negroes of Western Africa, and he informs me that 'the women, at least among the more intelligent Pagan tribes, have no difficulty in getting the husbands whom they may desire, although it is considered unwomanly to ask a man to marry them. They are quite capable of falling in love, and of forming tender, passionate, and faithful attachments.' Additional cases could be given.

We thus see that with savages the women are not in quite so abject a state in relation to marriage as has often been supposed. They can tempt the men whom they prefer, and can sometimes reject those whom they dislike, either before or after marriage. Preference on the part of the women, steadily acting in any one direction, would ultimately affect the character of the tribe; for the women would generally choose not merely the handsomest men, according to their standard of taste, but those who were at the same time best able to defend and support them. Such well-endowed pairs would commonly rear a larger number of offspring than the less favoured. The same result would obviously follow in a still more marked manner if there was selection on both sides; that is, if the more attractive, and at the same time more powerful men were to prefer, and were preferred by, the more attractive women. And this double form of selection seems actually to have occurred, especially during the earlier periods of our long history.

Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, 2nd ed., John Murray, London, 1874, pp. 912-915.